

may be working one, two, or three jobs just to make ends meet, and sometimes it is still not enough. SNAP is a critical program that millions of Americans depend on to keep from going hungry.

Mr. Speaker, during the last Republican shutdown in 2013, SNAP had contingency funds available from the stimulus law that meant SNAP benefits continued uninterrupted. But stimulus funding was cut off in November of 2013. So this time around there is no back-up plan for SNAP.

Current law prevents the U.S. Department of Agriculture from spending SNAP money it doesn't have. Without congressional action, USDA will be forced to shut off retailers from accepting SNAP benefits within the first few days of October.

That means families won't be able to use their SNAP benefits to purchase food at any store that normally accepts SNAP, including grocery stores, big-box retailers, and corner stores.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfathomable to me that this would happen, that Republicans would threaten the food benefits of tens of millions of American children, families, and seniors, all just to score political points with their right-wing base. Whether Republicans shut down the government this week or in December, it is unacceptable to leave struggling families out in the cold.

As our economy continues to recover, I would remind my colleagues that SNAP is one of the quickest, most effective economic multipliers we have. Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates about \$1.70 in economic activity.

About 80 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed within 2 weeks of receipt, and about 97 percent are spent within a month. Every day SNAP pumps money back into our local economies and supports local businesses.

SNAP benefits can only be spent on food, meaning that a family can use its other income to meet its other essential needs, like paying rent, utilities, and medical care.

Mr. Speaker, not only would a government shutdown have a devastating impact on hungry families, it has the potential to result in serious economic harm to retailers that could ripple throughout our economy.

Already food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens are bracing to serve an influx of clients if SNAP benefits are cut off. But despite the incredible work they do, these charities are already overburdened. The demand for food assistance is incredibly high.

They are working tirelessly every day to meet the need, and charities are already forced to pick up the slack from an inadequate SNAP benefit. All too often the benefit runs out before the end of the month and families must turn to charities just to cobble together enough to eat.

I cannot begin to imagine how overwhelmed antihunger agencies will be if millions of Americans lose access to

SNAP next month or the month after. Unfortunately, in a Republican-controlled Congress with the habit of going from one crisis to the next, this scenario is all too realistic.

A government shutdown would literally take food away from hungry Americans. It would be devastating for millions of Americans that are already struggling to put food on the table and make ends meet. Families who rely on SNAP cannot afford to have their food benefits disrupted even for a day.

Mr. Speaker, we should be working to end hunger now, not making hunger worse in this country, the richest country in the world. Quite frankly, it is unconscionable we are even in a situation where millions of hungry people are at risk of losing their food benefit.

Last week Pope Francis delivered an inspiring message to Congress. It is unthinkable that we could so quickly forget his call for compassion in helping the least among us. For millions of American families who are already struggling to put food on the table, we should be giving them a hand up, not taking food away.

Nobody in this Chamber will go without food if the Republicans shut down the government. None of our kids will go without food, but millions and millions of our fellow citizens will.

For the sake of 45 million Americans across the country and more than 700,000 in Massachusetts who depend on SNAP, I urge my Republican colleagues to work with Democrats on a long-term, bipartisan budget that puts families first. Families who rely on SNAP shouldn't have to worry about losing their benefits at the end of every short-term funding bill.

Whether it is this week or in December, our most vulnerable families simply cannot afford another government shutdown.

SPRUCE KNOB-SENECA ROCKS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to recognize Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks on their 50th year as a national recreation area.

Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area was established by an act of Congress on September 28, 1965, and has been enjoyed by families from all over the country ever since.

It is located in Pendleton County in the eastern panhandle area of my district in West Virginia. I was lucky enough to have had the privilege to visit just last month.

As the only true peak on the East Coast of the United States, it lures rock climbers from all around and boasts some of the most spectacular scenery on this side of the Mississippi.

Let me tell you, it is even more beautiful in person. Don't take my word for

it, though. I encourage everyone to plan a trip to this national treasure.

LIFE AT CONCEPTION ACT

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to recognize the historic event that took place last week. On September 24, 2015, his Holiness Pope Francis became the first Pope to ever address Congress.

I would like to thank all that were involved in this planning process that led to this significant event, especially Speaker JOHN BOEHNER. It was truly an honor to take part in the first papal address to Congress.

Pope Francis' message was one of hope and love, and it reminded us that we need to keep fighting for the sanctity of life, marriage, family, and religious liberty.

Pope Francis clearly stated that there is a moral obligation to protect unborn babies. Protecting the unborn is one of the issues that compelled me to run for political office in the first place, and I am committed to continuing to fight in Congress.

During his address, the Pope said:

The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development. I am convinced that this is the best way, since every life is sacred, every human person is endowed with an inalienable dignity.

I am proud to be the lead sponsor of H.R. 816, the Life at Conception Act. The Life at Conception Act is a necessary component in the long-term protection of the unborn. In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court justices wrote that, since the beginning of life is not defined by law, it is open to interpretation.

The Life at Conception Act simply defines by Congress that the life of a child begins at conception. Establishing personhood will protect the right to life of unborn children who are the most defenseless among us and need our protection.

This bill sets a standard for promoting and encouraging a culture of life. If enacted, it would simply affirm that unborn children are deserving of protection.

We currently have 122 cosponsors of this important bill. I encourage my colleagues in the House to cosponsor as well.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, this Congress is making a habit, unfortunately, of acting in crisis mode, which is irresponsible and does a disservice to the fate and the trust that the American public has placed in us as their elected representatives, and this has a direct bearing on our economy. The Pope spoke to the need for us to come together and negotiate bipartisan solutions for the many challenges facing the United States and the world.

The first and most pressing issue is to fund government. Thankfully, tomorrow the House is expected to vote

on a short-term continuing resolution to do just that. I hope my colleagues will vote in favor of a clean continuing resolution to avert a government shutdown. There is no justification to shut down government. Yes, we have our differences. We negotiate that in a budget process.

However, we know that this is a short-term fix and that a real solution to fixing our Nation's very real and very serious budget problems is in producing a long-term budget, and we should do that in December.

Instead of moving from one crisis to another crisis, we must get back to the work of governing responsibly. Responsible governance requires that we come together, work hard, compromise on a bipartisan budget that will not result in poorly thought-out, across-the-board spending cuts, more commonly known as sequestration.

Failing to govern responsibly and compromise will negatively impact industries so vital to America. That includes our agriculture economy, which provides the food that we eat on America's dinner table. It includes manufacturing and service industries that provide goods and services that we trade.

Finally, it will severely impact some programs that support our Nation's future, like health care, education, public safety, and research and development, costing billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

In addition to negotiating a bipartisan budget agreement, we need to address the impacts of sequestration and the Congress must address the debt ceiling this December without fanfare that could further throw our economy into chaos.

If the United States were to default on its loans or fail to live up to our promises to those of retirement age, it would send our economy in a downward spiral just at the time that we are finally recovering from this Great Recession.

Unfortunately, not all the areas of the United States are feeling the recovery's effects equally. In the San Joaquin Valley that I represent, many of my constituents are still feeling the effects of the recession, in addition to the unnecessary impacts of our failure to invest in infrastructure, our water infrastructure that we terribly need to invest in as well as our transportation infrastructure.

Vital programs, like the Ex-Im Bank, the highway trust fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, have either expired or will soon expire. The Export-Import Bank's charter which was created has sustained 1½ million private sector jobs and expired June 30.

By refusing to bring up the reauthorization of the Bank for a vote, American jobs are being threatened and Congress is undermining the ability of American businesses to compete in a global market.

The highway trust fund is set to expire on October 29. Our Nation's roads, bridges, highways, and railroads are

out of date and are in dire need of repair. I have never seen a bridge or road that is Republican or Democrat. This is just investing in America.

A long-term transportation bill was last passed by Congress in 2009. Since then, Congress has had 34 short-term patches. That is simply irresponsible. This not only puts American's safety at risk, but completely undermines our ability to create and sustain American jobs by investing in our infrastructure.

Congress must act to work on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize these programs and countless other Federal programs that are set to expire not only this week, but in December, when we address long-term funding for the next fiscal year. Otherwise, there will be another threat to shut down government in December. It is irresponsible.

Last week Pope Francis reminded us of our responsibilities, the better angels in all of us. He said, "A good political leader is one who, with the interests of all in mind, seizes the moment in a spirit of openness and pragmatism. A good political leader always opts to initiate processes rather than simply possessing spaces."

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Therefore, the question we should be asking: Are we simply possessing spaces or are we trying to find together the common good for the common man, as Pope Francis suggested?

I hope his spiritual guidance will allow us to work together to do what we were sent here to do, which is the people's work. That is what we were sent here to do on behalf of all Americans.

AGRICULTURE HAS A BRIGHT FUTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of two Future Farmers of America teams from my district after they placed first and second at a national competition this past weekend.

The competition, known as "The Big E," hosts teams from schools from the East Coast and the Mid-Atlantic regions which compete in a wide variety of categories, including poultry science, equine events, dairy science, and much more.

A team from Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, Centre County, placed first in the poultry science career development event and was responsible for judging the birds and rating their quality along with other criteria.

The second team, from the Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology in Pleasant Gap, Pennsylvania, Centre County, placed second in the nursery and landscaping division. They were tasked with designing and selling a landscaping plan. The team is now working on a landscape project for Pennsylvania's farm show in January.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the accomplishments of these future farmers and also recognize the important work performed by the FFA. The success of these young people shows that the industry is in good hands and agriculture has a bright future.

PUT AN END TO TRAGIC AND WASTEFUL SPENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. NOLAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NOLAN. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, the foolish and wasteful squandering of Americans' hard-earned taxpayer dollars are once again on display in the war in the Middle East and in Syria. Before I get to my point, I want to remind my colleagues here that we spent \$3 trillion on the war in Iraq. That is right, \$3 trillion. Look where it has gotten us.

I would like to remind my colleagues that for one of those trillion we could have graduated every college kid in America and vocational school kid in America debt free. Instead, we have saddled them with debt that is crippling their ability to get ahead and our economy to grow.

It is no secret that bridges are falling down here in America and trains are coming off the rails. For one of those trillion dollars, we could have rebuilt our infrastructure and transportation system in this country, once again creating good jobs and opportunities and laying the foundation for our economy to grow.

For another trillion of those dollars, we could have given the American taxpayers a trillion-dollar tax break. Would they not have loved that and do they not need that? Instead, we are still looking at \$2 trillion going forward in taking care of the men and women who served: the warriors, the patriots, the men and women who were willing to stand up and protect us, but who lost arms and lost legs and suffered severe brain injuries. Yes, that is right, \$2 trillion going forward, tending to and caring for them. And that is a moral obligation that we are obligated to and must fulfill.

Now to my point today. Last year the Congress authorized \$500 million to be spent on training the so-called moderate Free Syrian rebels, and now we have learned that only a handful, like four to five, has shown up for duty, according to Lloyd Austin, the U.S. Central Commander for troops in the Middle East.

Back in June, Republican Congressman CURT CLAWSON and I offered an amendment to the Defense Appropriations bill to stop funding this so-called Free Syrian rebel program. Why? Well, the hard, cold fact is that many of their leaders told us at the time that they would not use the money to fight and join us in the fight against ISIL. Now we ask the House not to appropriate an additional \$600 million, seeing that the \$500 million that was spent has already been wasted and misspent.